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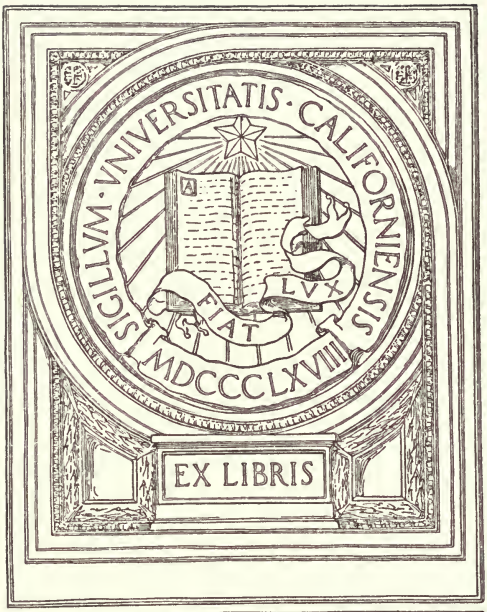
CAPTURE OF MOUNT WASHINGTON.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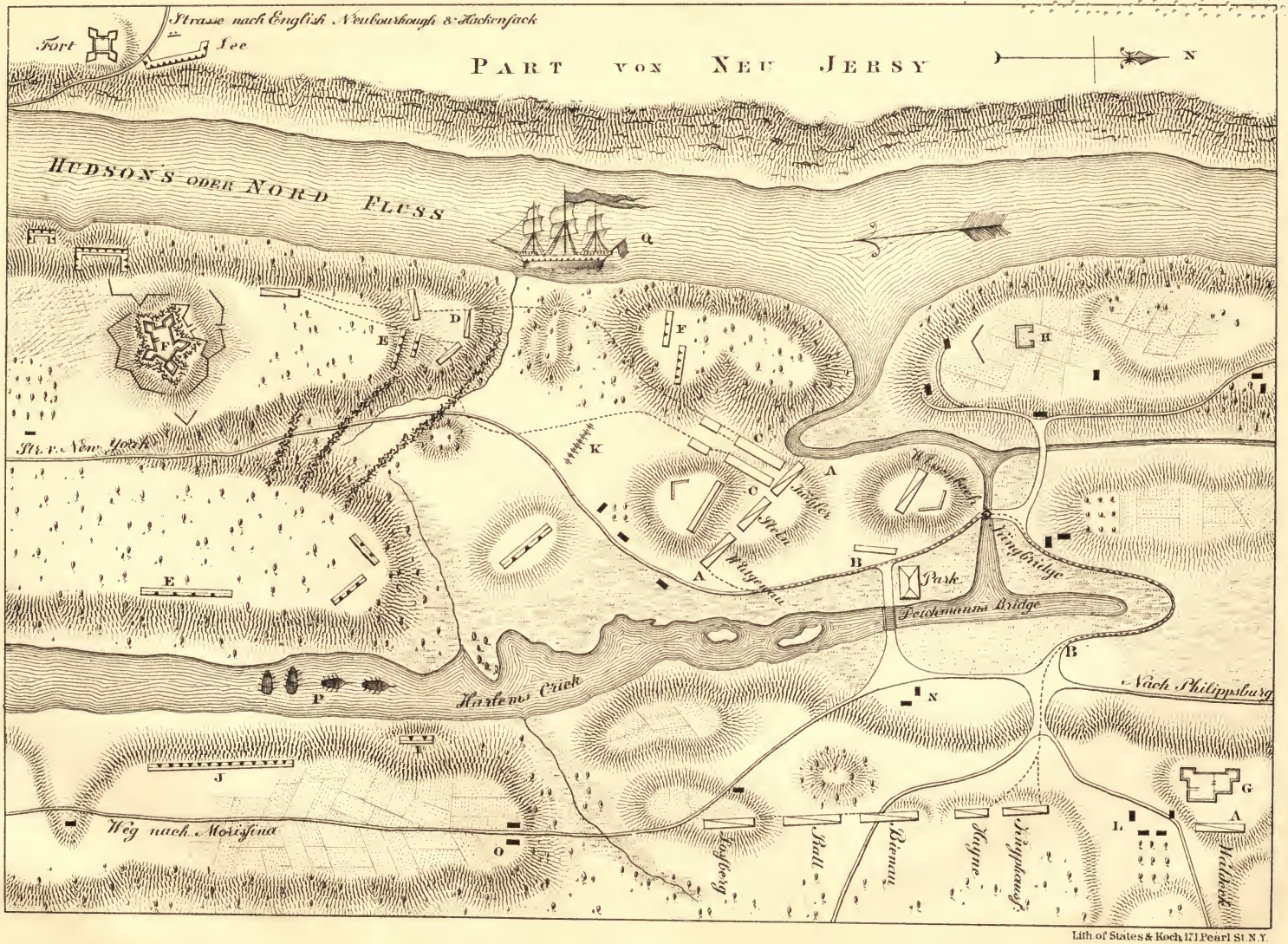
Knyphausen's Attack on Fort Washington November 16, 1776.



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THE

CAPTURE OF MOUNT WASHINGTON,

NOVEMBER 16TH, 1776,

THE RESULT OF TREASON.

BY

EDWARD F. DE LANCEY.

NEW YORK.

1877.

Read before the New York Historical Society, at its Regular Meeting on December 5th, 1876, in commemoration of the one hundredth anniversary of the capture of Mount Washington on November 16th, 1776.

Reprinted from the "Magazine of American History" for February, 1877, with corrections of press errors, an additional Map, and an Appendix.

EDITION 150 COPIES.

EXPLANATION OF MAP.

Photo-lithographic fac-simile of a copy taken from the original in Cassel for Professor Joy, now in the possession of J. Carson Brevoort, Esq.

TRANSLATION OF THE LEGEND ON THE MAP.—The attack which His Excellency the Hon. General Lieutenant von Knyphausen, with eight Battalions of Hessians and one Battalion of Waldeckers, on the 16 November 1776, made on Fort Washington, taking it and a quantity of Ammunition and Provisions, and 2,600 American Prisoners.

A Camp before the Attack. *B* March of the said Regiments for King's Bridge. *C* Formation of the Columns of which one on the right and another on the left. *D* The Riflemen. *E* Enemy's Line of Batteries. *F G H* Fort Washington, Fort Independence, Speak-Devil Fort garrisoned by the Enemy. *I* Our Batteries. *K* Hessian Field Artillery. *L* Quarters of His Excellency. *M* Do. of General Major Schmidt. *N* Do. of General Cleveland. *O* Do. of Col. Rall. *P* Landing of the English Brigade on the feint. *Q* Frigate that made a strong cannonade at the beginning of the attack.

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MOUNT WASHINGTON AND ITS CAPTURE ON THE 16TH OF NOVEMBER, 1776.

FOUR of the military events of the American Revolution occurred upon the island of New York:—1st The landing at Kips Bay, and the occupation of the city, by the British army, on the 15th of September, 1776; 2d The action of Harlem Plains on the succeeding day; 3d The capture of Mount Washington two months afterwards, and 4th The evacuation of the island and the victorious entry of Washington, on the 25th of November, 1783.

A century ago, the 16th day of November 1776, took place the storming and capture of Mount Washington, with its fort, garrison, armament and stores, by the army of Sir William Howe, who had been just made a Knight of the Bath for his victory, a few weeks before, at Brooklyn Heights. It was the first and the last great battle ever fought on the island of Manhattan since its settlement by Europeans. It was a terrible disaster to the American arms, and a heavy blow to the cause of the colonies. It gave to the British army and to England undisputed possession of the city and harbor of New York, the leading city and chief seaport of America; a possession which it was never after in the power of the colonies even to threaten successfully, much less regain.

It struck instantly from the then rapidly dissolving army of Washington nearly three thousand effective men. By the same blow, practically, Fort Lee, on the opposite side of the Hudson, with its guns and most of its stores, was taken, and New Jersey thrown open to the strong, well appointed, victorious troops of Howe, with nought to oppose them but the broken, dispirited, deserting, half clad regiments of Washington, dwindled down to less than three thousand men.[1] "In ten days," wrote Washington to his brother John Augustine, three days after the capture, "there will not be above two thousand men, if that number, of the fixed

[1]Washington to Lee, 21 Nov. Force 5th series, vol. iii pp. 78–9. Letter of Matthew Tilghman. Ibid. p. 1053.

established regiments on this side of Hudson's river to oppose Howe's whole army, and very little more on the other to secure the Eastern colonies and the important passes leading through the Highlands to Albany and the country about the lakes."[1] No wonder he exclaims in the same letter, in the full confidence of fraternal love, " I am wearied almost to death with the retrogade motion of things, and I solemnly protest, that a pecuniary reward of twenty thousand pounds a year would not induce me to undergo what I do; and after all to lose my character, as it is impossible under such a variety of distressing circumstances, to conduct matters agreeably to public expectation, or even to the expectation of those who employ me, as they will not make proper allowances for the difficulties their own errors have occasioned."

Whence and why this disaster? Who was responsible? Was it the commandant of the post, the General in charge of Fort Lee with whom that officer acted, or was it the Commander-in-Chief himself?

Perhaps no questions growing out of any single event of the Revolution were discussed with more vigor at the time, or have given rise to more controversy since, than these. Each of the three officers, Washington, Greene, and Magaw have had their enemies and opposers, friends and defenders.

Two facts, utterly foreign to the capture as acts of war, or rather of military science and forecast, had much to do with this controversy ;— the bitter antagonism to Washington in the Continental Congress, and the intense antipathy between the officers and men from New England and those from all the other colonies. These facts are only mentioned, because they should always be borne in mind in considering the military affairs of the Revolution, and especially those of its first two years.

The throwing of his army into Westchester county at Throg's Neck, by Sir William Howe on the 12th of October, 1776, forced Washington to evacuate New York Island, with the fortified camp at Kingsbridge, and to retreat to the north along the line of the river Bronx, to avoid being outflanked and surrounded. At the time Washington was at the Roger Morris House—his well-known head-quarters—and the bulk of his army lay in its neighborhood, while a strong force held Kingsbridge and the adjoining hills in Westchester county.

The northern part of the island of Manhattan is a narrow, high, rocky, wooded region of singular natural beauty ; unique as a feature in modern cities, and precisely such a spot as in an ancient Greek city would have

[1]Force 5th series, vol. iii, p. 766.

been chosen for its Acropolis. Separated from the rest of the island by the plains of Harlem on the south, and extending thence to Kingsbridge on the north, a distance of about four miles, its average width is only about three-fourths of a mile. Bordered on the east by the narrow winding, umbrageous Harlem, and on the west by the magnificent Hudson, the two united by the historic inlet of Spuyten Duyvel, it rises from these rivers in sudden, rocky, forest clad precipices, nearly a hundred feet in height, which for well nigh three-fourths of its circumference are almost inaccessible. These natural buttresses support an irregular plain, the surface of which rises toward the centre to an eminence on the side of the Hudson two hundred feet above its waters, and to another on the side of the Harlem of almost equal height, between which lies the most level part of the entire region. This towards its northern end sinks into a narrow valley or gorge, through which runs the road to Kingsbridge. Besides the Kingsbridge, which connected the island with the mainland of Westchester, there was another bridge, a short distance south east of it, called Dyckman's bridge. Opposite these bridges the rocky bluffs recede to the west for nearly a mile, leaving between them and the Harlem river a small plain, on which rise two or three low hills. At the southern end of this plain was a little branch of the Harlem called Sherman's creek, still in existence, directly above and south of which rises the high eminence on the Harlem above-mentioned, then termed "Laurel Hill," and since, and now, "Fort George."

The highest eminence on the Hudson, which was southwest from Laurel Hill, was selected by Colonel Rufus Putnam, in the summer of 1776, as the site of a large earthwork fortification for the defence of and to aid the obstructions intended to close the Hudson against the passage of ships, which, after the Commander-in-Chief, was called "Fort Washington."

The term "Mount Washington" was given in 1776 to the entire elevated region above described. It is so-called in the letters and documents of that period, though sometimes styled "Harlem Heights;" and in the same sense it is here used, although in our day the appellation has become restricted to the small part of the region immediately adjacent to the old fortification. That fortification—and that only—is here called "Fort Washington."

Directly beneath the eminence on which Fort Washington stood, a low cape, or rather promontory, called Jeffrey's Hook, throws itself out into the waters of the Hudson, making the river narrower there than from any other point on the Manhattan shore. Between this "Hook" and the

Jersey shore extended a line of sunken vessels and *chevaux-de-frise*, intended to obstruct the passage of the river. On the summit of the Palisades, opposite Fort Washington, was erected about the same time another fortification to defend the Jersey end of the obstructions, called "Fort Constitution" and subsequently "Fort Lee," in honor of General Charles Lee. This latter was therefore dependent on the former, and was of no value without it. Both forts together commanded the river and the communication between its two sides, or, in a larger sense, between New England and the colonies west and south of the Hudson.

Jutting out into and rising above the Harlem plains, at the extreme south eastern extremity of Mount Washington, was a lofty and almost perpendicular promontory, now blasted away, called "The Point of Rocks." It was surmounted by a strong battery, and commanded "the King's Highway," or "the Road to Kingsbridge," from the city of New York, and was the American post nearest to the British lines.

The American lines ran from the Point of Rocks westwardly to the Hudson river, along the southern face of Mount Washington, lower and less precipitous there than any where else, and northeastwardly along its high southeastern face to the Harlem river.

A slight depression in the latter face, as it approached the Harlem, afforded a passage for the road to Kingsbridge as it ascended from the Harlem plains, forming the well-known "Break Neck Hill," a short distance to the east of which road stood the house of Colonel Roger Morris, occupied by Washington as his headquarters. A few weeks before, Roger Morris and his fair wife had retired to the Highlands, little dreaming that his old friend and companion of "the last war," and his wife's old admirer, was to become the next master of their beautiful home.

East and west of the Point of Rocks, in exposed places, the Americans had thrown up light breast works and facing the Hudson some small batteries, the largest being upon Jeffrey's Hook. But their main works were at Mount Washington and south of the Fort—three distinct lines of fortifications running across the island from river to river.

The middle line was located about a third of a mile south of the Morris House; a thoroughly completed strong work, with redoubts, bastions, and curtains,—a well made line of intrenchments. The extreme southern line was placed about a third of a mile further to the south, but it was not so well built, nor in as favorable a location; while the northernmost one, very near the Morris House, and about the same distance to the north of the middle line, was vastly inferior, and in some parts never wholly completed.

Upon its north side Mount Washington had no intrenched lines whatever. On the summit of Laurel Hill was a small battery and redoubt, and at the northern brow of the long hill, on which Fort Washington stood—above what is now styled Inwood—was another redoubt and battery of three guns, to aid in protecting the river obstructions by an enfilading fire. The round wooded hill on the south side of the entrance to Spuyten Duyvel was crowned by another small work of a similar character mounting two guns.[1] From this first mentioned battery and hill, down and across the gorge occupied by the Kingsbridge road to Laurel Hill, ran two or three lines of *abatis*, or felled trees, hastily made by the Americans after they retired on the 2d of November from Kingsbridge.

Fort Washington itself was a large earth work fortification of five bastions, without supporting breastworks, except a single one on its north side. It was erected in July, 1776, by the Pennsylvania battalions or regiments under Brig. Gen. Thomas Mifflin; the fifth commanded by Colonel Robert Magaw, and the third by Colonel John Shee: The last named officer, in September, went home on furlough, and never again rejoined his regiment, which thereafter was commanded by Lambert Cadwallader, its Lieutenant Colonel.[2] These regiments arrived in New York at the end of June, 1776, full in numbers but deficient in arms, the latter having only 300 guns, and the former but 125[3]—a want subsequently remedied. The fort had been laid out by Colonel Rufus Putnam, Engineer-in-Chief, built under his directions at Washington's request, and was intended to cover the communication with New Jersey in connection with Fort Lee, on the summit of the Palisades on the opposite or Jersey side of the Hudson, which was erected at the same time by General Hugh Mercer and the troops under his command.

It had no casemates, barracks nor well, and when invested, contained but small supplies of provisions, or fuel, or stores of any kind requisite to stand a siege of any length. With the exception of a wooden magazine and some offices, it had no interior construction and was, in fact, simply a large, open earth work.[4] How many guns it mounted is not now known. The British return of ordnance of all sizes

[1]Howe's Dispatch. Force 5th series, vol. iii, p. 924.

[2]Graydon's Memoir, Littell's ed., p. 181. Cadwallader was commissioned Colonel of this regiment by the Continental Congress on the 25th of October, 1776. See Commission Penn. Archives, vol. v., p. 53.

[3]Mifflin's letter to Washington 5th July 1776. Force 5th series, vol. i, p. 27.

[4]Graydon, 186.

captured at Mount Washington was forty-seven,[1] of which probably much less than one-half were mounted in the fort.

The summer of 1776 was of great heat, and these Pennsylvania troops were drilled hard, as well as worked hard. About a fourth were always on the sick list. Excepting two days service on Long Island, immediately following the battle of the 27th of August, and some short marches into Westchester, just after their return from Brooklyn, they saw no service in the field except upon Mount Washington.[2]

The American army lay encamped on Mount Washington from the beginning of September 'till the 13th of October, 1776, a period of about five weeks.

At the latter end of September, Mr. James Allen,[3] of Philadelphia, second son of Chief Justice Allen, and Dr Smith, the Provost of the College in that city, paid a visit of curiosity, merely, to the seat of war. In the manuscript diary of the former there is an account of his visit to Mount Washington at this time. From Amboy, where he saw his old friends Generals Dickenson and Mercer, he went to Bergen, and lodged with another friend, General Roberdeau, who commanded that post. "Thence," says the diary, "to Fort Constitution, now Fort Lee, commanded by my old acquaintance, General Ewing, with whom I dined, and same day crossed the river to Head-quarters. General Washington received me with the utmost politeness. I lodged with him; and found there Messrs. Jos. Reed, Tilghman, Grayson, Moyland, L. Cadwallader, and many others of my acquaintance, and was very happy with them. Nothing happened while I was there except an attempt of our army to bring off grain from Harlem, in which they did not succeed, and which had well nigh brought on an engagement. Next day I re-crossed the river to Fort Lee, and came through Hackensack in company with Captain Charles Craig, and thence through Morristown to Union, where I found my wife and child, and Mrs. Lawrence,"[4] the latter lady being his wife's mother.

Ten days before this visit, on the 18th of August, says General Heath, not a single cannon was mounted beyond Mount Washington.[5] On the

[1]Force 5th series, vol. iii, p. 1058.

[2]They were recruited in the early part of 1776, and so well drilled in Philadelphia, prior to being sent to New York at the end of June, as to receive mention from Washington himself.

[3]James Allen, the second son of Chief Justice William Allen, of Pennsylvania, was a prominent lawyer of Philadelphia and a member of Assembly for Northampton county. He was a brother-in-law to Governor John Penn and to James de Lancey, of New York, the head of that family, eldest son of James de Lancey who died Governor of New York in 1760.

[4]MS. Diary of James Allen.

[5]Force 5th series, vol. i, p. 1030.

19th William Duer was ordered by the New York Convention to consult with Washington on the subject of aiding him to obstruct the river opposite Mount Washington.[1]

On the third of September Washington ordered Mercer to lay out and build additional works at Fort Lee.[2] The very same day Colonel Rufus Putnam stated in his report to the Commander-inChief of that date, that with both sides of the river fortified as he recommended, and the forts and batteries well filled with guns and ammunition, and the river obstructed by sunken vessels, if the enemy "attempted to force this post, I think they must be beaten."[3]

On this same third of September also, it strangely happened General Nathaniel Greene wrote Washington that remarkable private letter urging in the strongest terms the burning of New York and its suburbs, and the evacuation of the island, closing it with this request—"should your excellency agree with me in the first two points, that a speedy and general retreat is necessary, and also, that the city and suburbs should be burned, I would advise to call a general council on that question, and take every general officer's opinion upon it."[4]

Washington, singularly enough, had already submitted the question of destroying New York to Congress the very day before;[5] and Hancock, also on this same 3d day of September, replied to him, that Congress, on considering his letter of the 2d, "came to a resolution in a committee of the whole house that no damage should be done to the city of New York."[6]

The Commander-in-Chief agreeing to Greene's suggestions, did call a council of general officers on the 7th, and they decided to defend and not to destroy and evacuate the city, by a majority vote. The minority were for a total and immediate removal from the city, "nor were some of the majority," says Washington to Hancock, "a little influenced in

[1]Journals N. Y. Prov. Cong., vol. i, p. 579.

[2]Force 5th series, vol. ii, p. 140.

[3]Ibid. 139. The obstructions proved futile. On September 13 some of the *chevaux de frise* having been floating with the tide some days before, the N. Y. Committee of Safety wrote George Clinton on the subject, and on the 17th ordered Capt. Thomas Greenhill to make a survey of the landings, etc. of Mount Washington and report, and on the 21st ordered six vessels purchased by Greenhill and delivered to Capt. Cook at Mount Washington to be sunk. On October 3d, Cook was cutting timber for the *chevaux de frise* up the river, and was written for to sink the vessels, 2 sloops, 2 brigs, and 2 large ships, which got there about the 25th of September. Journals Prov. Cong., pp. 624, 628, 639, 663.

[4]Force 5th series, vol. ii, pp. 182–3.

[5]Force 5th series, vol. ii, pp. 182–3.

[6]Ibid. p. 135.

their opinions, to whom the determination of Congress was known, against an evacuation totally, as they were led to suspect Congress wished it to be maintained at every hazard."[1]

This decision did not suit Greene, nor apparently Washington, and on the 11th of September the former, with six Brigadiers, presented a written petition signed by them all, to the latter, requesting him to call *another council of war to re-consider the question.* Washington assented, and called it for the next day, the 12th, at McDougall's quarters; when ten generals, Beall, Scott, Fellows, Wadsworth, Nixon, McDougall, Parsons, Mifflin, Greene, and Putnam, voted to re-consider and evacuate; and three, Spencer, George Clinton, and Heath, to adhere and defend. The record of this council thus closes: "It was considered what number of men are necessary to be left for the defence of *Mount Washington* and its dependencies—agreed, that it be eight thousand."[2]

This is the first official mention that Mount Washington was to be defended, and it is noteworthy that so large a number of men was then deemed necessary for that object. From this summary of the official action of Congress, Washington and the Council of War, we learn why Mount Washington was occupied and held.

Pursuant to the decision of the Council of War just mentioned, the evacuation of the island began on the 13th, continued on the 14th, and was interrupted on the 15th of September, 1776, by the landing at Kip's Bay and the taking of the city by the British. After the action of Harlem Plains the succeeding day, the two armies lay encamped opposite each other, separated by those plains. The British lines extended from Horen's Hook, on the East river at 90th street, along the heights at McGowan's Pass (the north end of the Central Park) to the end of the high ground on the south side of the western end of the Harlem plains at 125th street, while the American lines occupied the whole of the southern and eastern side of Mount Washington, facing the northern side of those plains, from the Harlem to the Hudson.

Such were the positions of the two armies when Howe suddenly, on the 12th of October, in a dense fog, threw all his army upon Throg's Neck, nine miles up Long Island Sound, with the exception of a force under Lord Percy sufficient to hold the British lines just mentioned, and the city of New York.

Washington, as before stated, was at the Morris House. Late in the day an express from General Heath advised him of the landing, the news

[1]Force 5th series, vol. ii, p. 237.
[2]Ibid. 325, 328, and 330.

of which had reached the post of that officer at Kingsbridge. He instantly ordered a detachment, made up of his best troops, to Westchester to oppose them.[1] Among these was the regiment of Prescott of Pepperell, the hero of Bunker Hill, to whose lot it fell singularly enough, for the second time, to aid mainly in forcing Howe from a peninsula, by defending with success the road and Mill Dam leading from Throg's Neck to Westchester village.

So unexpected was this movement of Howe, that the very day before it took place—the 11th—General Greene, from Fort Lee, wrote Governer Cooke, of Rhode Island, "our army are so strongly fortified and so much out of the command of the shipping, we have little more to fear this campaign."[2] General Greene however, the same day, as soon as he heard of it, at 5 o'clock P. M. of the 12th, wrote Washington of the fact, and offered if he desired them three brigades and his own services."[3]

The 13th Washington spent chiefly in a personal reconnoissance of southern Westchester. The next day, the 14th, he formed his army into four divisions, under Major Generals Lee, Heath, Sullivan, and Lincoln, which the following day, the 15th, moved into Westchester county. The same day, the 14th, he formed two other divisions to remain on the island under Major Generals Spencer and Putnam; the former to take charge of all Mount Washington south of the northernmost of the fortified lines from river to river, near head-quarters, and the latter the rest of it on the north of that line. General Putnam, says the order, "will also attend particularly to the works about Mount Washington and to the obstructions in the river, which should be increased as fast as possible."[4]

General Lee had arrived from the south the day of his appointment, and after making a brief stop at the fort which bears his name, crossed the river to Mount Washington, stopping long enough, however, to write this short note to General Gates, with his views of things as he found them: "I write this scroll in a hurry. Colonel Ward will describe the position of our army, which in my own breast I do not approve—*inter nos* the Congress seem to stumble at every step. I do not mean one or two of the cattle, but the whole stable. I have been very free in delivering my opinion to 'em. In my opinion, General Washington is much to blame for not menancing 'em with resignation unless they refrain from unhinging the army by their absurd interference."[5]

[1]Force 5th series, vol. ii, pp. 1014 and 1025.
[2]Force 5th series, vol. ii, p. 997.
[3]Ibid. p. 1015.
[4]General orders Oct. 14.
[5]Lee papers, vol. ii, p. 261.

Lee was outspoken in condemnation of the policy of leaving and holding a garrison in Fort Washington, but he and those who thought with him were overruled in the council of war, held on the 16th at his own head-quarters in Westchester. Washington and all his Major Generals and Brigadiers were present to the number of sixteen, except Greene. The command of the latter being in New Jersey was the probable cause of his absence. At all events he was not there.

This council agreed that "*Fort Washington* be retained as long as possible." The record gives no votes but simply the result. It is, therefore, not officially known who was on one side and who on the other.[1] And here a most important point requires attention, and that is the limited extent, at this time, of Washington's powers as Commander-in-Chief. He did not have, nor exercise, the independent "one man power," which by all military rules belongs to that command.

He could not overrule the council of war if he saw fit, and act on his own independent judgment, as Commanders-in-Chief usually do. Receiving his appointment from Congress the year previous, in virtue, as he himself has told us, of "a political necessity," that body was unwilling to vest in him the power referred to, and he was thus compelled to carry out the decisions of his council of war, no matter whether he individually did, or did not, approve them. Not until Congress at the very end of December, 1776, when Cornwallis was overrunning New Jersey, on the eve of their flight to Baltimore, and in fear of their own existence, vested in him the powers of a dictator, did he possess the full perogatives of a Commander-in-Chief. From the hour when he drew his sword under the great elm at Cambridge as leader of the armies of America, till that action of Congress he was, in all important steps, subject to the will and the decision of a majority of his own general officers. This fact must especially be borne in mind in the matter of Mount Washington.

By the 20th of October all the troops left on the island of New York under Spencer and Putnam had been withdrawn, except the regiments intended to garrison Mount Washington.[2] These were Magaw's fifth and Cadwallader's third Pennsylvania battalions before mentioned.

Putnam, before leaving, had requested of Greene a re-inforcement from Fort Lee. The latter sent him, as he tells Washington in a letter of the 24th, between 200 and 300 of Durkie's regiment, and also sufficient

[1] Force 5th series, vol. ii, p. 1117.

[2] Harrison to Congress. Force 5th series, vol. ii, p. 1137.

provisions for the garrison.[1] Harrison, however, writing for Washington the same day, from White Plains, tells Hancock that there "are about 1400 men at Mount Washington and 600 at Kingsbridge."[2] But Colonel Lasher, the officer in command at the latter post, wrote General Heath on the 26th that he only had 400 men and 6 artillery men.[3] On the 27th Lasher had orders from Heath to quit the post, burn the barracks, and join the army at White Plains, and either do this himself, or communicate with Magaw, as he pleased. He obeyed and executed the orders himself.[4]

The same day, which was Sunday, an attack was made by Lord Percy on Mount Washington by land, at the same time that two men-of-war attempted to pass it and go up the river. The latter were severely cut up by Magaw's artillery, and one of them, badly crippled, had to retire.[5] The British troops moved down from their lines at McGowan's Pass to Harlem Plains and began a fire with field pieces, which the Americans returned from their fortified lines and batteries. It was a mere artillery duel, had no effect, and was apparently intended as a feint.[6] The cannonade was heard at White Plains.[7] This affair was probably one great cause of Greene's confidence in Fort Washington, and of his desire a fortnight later to hold it. He was present in the fort, and with Magaw, during the firing on the ships. The whole contest was over by three o'clock in the afternoon, when he returned to Fort Lee and wrote an account of it to General Mifflin,[8] and the next day sent another to the President of Congress. "From the Sunday affair," he wrote Washington on the 29th, "I am more fully convinced that we can prevent any ships from stopping the communication."[9]

Two days afterwards, Greene asked Washington's opinion as to holding, not the fort only, but all Mount Washington, in these words: "I should be glad to know your excellency's mind about holding all the ground from the Kingsbridge to the lower lines. If we attempt to hold the ground, the garrison must still be re-inforced, but if the garrison is to draw into Mount (Fort) Washington, and only keep that, the num-

[1]Force 5th series vol. ii, pp. 1202, 1203, 1221.
[2]Ibid. 1239.
[3]Ibid. 1263.
[4]Ibid. vol. ii, p. 1264.
[5]Ibid. vol. ii, pp. 1263, 1265.
[6]Ibid. 1266.
[7]MS. Letter of General Silliman to his wife.
[8]Force 5th series, 1263, 1269.
[9]Ibid. 1281.

ber of the troops on the island is too large. * * * I shall re-inforce Colonel Magaw with Colonel Rawling's regiment, until I hear from your excellency respecting the matter. The motions of the grand army will best determine the propriety of endeavoring to hold all the ground from Kingsbridge to the lower lines. I shall be as much on the island of York as possible, so as not to neglect the duties of my own department."[1] What Washington's answer was we shall hereafter see. He was then at White Plains, expecting an immediate attack by Howe's whole army.

That high and beautiful region of south eastern Westchester, from Pell's Hill on the west to Heathcote Hill on the east, never glowed with more brilliant autumnal hues than on the 28th of October 1776. The white tents of the Hessians gleamed brightly in the morning sun, amid the glades and slopes of those fair hills which, rising from the shores of Long Island Sound, form the coast line of the old Manors of Pelham and of Scarsdale. Martial music woke the echoes of the woods, and its sounds were borne on the soft autumn breeze over the blue waters of the Sound, far toward the distant hills of Long Island. The stirring scenes of camp life, companies drilling, groups of officers, prancing horses, busy adjutants passing to and fro, and a few brilliant young aids gathered under the over-hanging porch of a quaint old stone house with low walls and a high roof, the flag above which marked it as headquarters, formed a picture that had never before been seen by the descendants of the Huguenot exiles who then dwelt on those lovely shores. They beheld with singular interest the marked features, dark, striking uniforms and strange arms of the Germans. Some of the older, perhaps, as they heard the guttural tones of the strangers, so different from their own musical tongue, recalled the days, a century before, when their own grandfathers, under the golden lilies of Louis Quartorze, had aided in the conquest of Alsace and Lothringen from the very people whose grandchildren stood before them.

Arriving in New York harbor a week before, this second Hessian contingent had been transferred to boats and sloops, and landed directly at New Rochelle, where they had since been recovering from the effects of their long sea voyage. They were six regiments from Hesse Cassel, and one from Waldeck, all soldiers trained in the tactics of the great Frederick.

The obloquy which American historians have naturally, perhaps, cast upon "the Hessians," as these Germans auxiliaries were, and still

[1]Force 5th Series, 1294.

are, generically styled, has deceived us much as to their real character. The men were the same people precisely as the 150,000 Germans whom we now find in this city of New York—such orderly, thriving citizens, and who have made New York the third or fourth German city, for population, in the world. They were drawn, as is our German population now, to use an Americanism, from the "masses" of the fatherland.

Their officers, however, were of an entirely different class, and one of which we have few, or none, here now. They were *all noblemen.* None but nobles could hold commissions under any German sovereign then, any more than they can now. The military services of Germany and Austria are the most aristocratic in Europe in 1876, as they were in 1776. As far as birth was concerned, the Hessian officers as a whole in Howe's army were superior to the English officers as a whole. A rich middle class Englishman could buy a commission for a son, and it was often done, by favor of the Horse Guards, for the express purpose of making the youth "a gentleman." But in the German services such a proceeding was not tolerated. The youth must possess the aristocratic prefix of "von," or "de," or he could not aspire to a commission under the sign manual of his sovereign, and those sovereigns exceeded twenty in number. The Hessian officers in America were polite, courteous, well-bred gentlemen, educated soldiers, and in the social circles of the time great favorites. As military men they were the best in Europe at that period. And of this we can have no stronger proof than the fact that to one of these very "Hessian," or "German" soldiers did the continental army owe all the tactics and discipline it ever possessed—Baron de Steuben.

The victorious guns of Howe had hardly ceased on Chatterton Hill, ere he dispatched an order to Lieutenant-General Baron von Knyphausen, the commander of the Hessians, to move from New Rochelle toward Kingsbridge. Leaving the Waldeck regiment as a guard, von Knyphausen marched with the rest of his command the next day, took post at Mile square, and on the 2d of November encamped upon New York island at Kingsbridge—the Americans retiring to Fort Washington at his approach.[1]

Why Howe did not attack Washington at White Plains after the brigades from Percy joined him, neither he, nor any one else, has ever satisfactorily explained. After his return to England, he told the committee of Parliament which investigated his conduct that he *had* intended an attack on Washington's right, which was opposite to the

[1]Howe's Dispatch, 30th Nov. Force 5th series, vol. iii, p. 923.

Hessians under de Heister, but that he had "political reasons, and no other, for declining to explain why that assault was not made."[1]

He retired from White Plains very suddenly in the night of the 5th of November, 1776, and his army had been moving some time on the road toward Dobb's Ferry before the fact was discovered by the Americans. "The design of this manœuvre is a matter of much conjecture and speculation, and cannot be accounted for with any degree of certainty," wrote Washington to Hancock on the 6th, and he called the same day a council of war, which unanimously agreed immediately to throw a body of troops into Jersey, and station 3,000 men at Peekskill to guard the Highlands. This was a perfectly natural conclusion. "Howe has but two moves more, in which we shall checkmate him," wrote Charles Lee, but without saying what they were.[2]

One was evidently to New Jersey, and the other to Mount Washington. Why did Howe choose the latter? That he intended originally to throw his army into Jersey from Dobb's Ferry and march for Philadelphia, leaving Washington to follow him as best he might—first, however, detaching and leaving behind a sufficient force to hold Westchester, and to keep in check, or invest, Mount Washington—is most probable. This would explain his order to von Knyphausen on the 28th, and the subsequent order of the 3d to Grant, to march the next day, the 4th, with the sixth brigade to de Lancey's Mill on the Bronx at West Farms, send the fourth brigade to Mile square in the same town, and the Waldeck regiment from New Rochelle to a bridge, three miles above de Lancey's Mills, on the same stream.[3]

Washington and his council of war evidently thought he would do so, hence their unanimous vote to throw an army into Jersey and to secure Peekskill. The record of that council shows that neither "Mount Washington" nor "Fort Washington" were even mentioned.[4] A striking fact, when we know from a letter of the Commander-in-Chief himself, written the day the council met, that all "communication with Mount Washington has now been cut off for two weeks."[5] Reed, on the same 6th of November, says: "Opinions here are various; some think they are falling down on Mount Washington; others that they mean to take shipping up North river and fall upon our rear; others, and a great majority, think that finding our army too strongly posted they have changed their whole

[1]Howe's Narrative, p. 7.
[2]Letter of Wm. Whipple to John Langdon. Force 5th series, vol. iii, p. 555.
[3]Howe's Dispatch.
[4]Force 5th series. vol. iii, p. 543.
[5]To Pennsylvania Commissioners, Nov. 6, 1776. Force 5th series, vol. iii, p. 546.

plan, and are bending southward, intending to penetrate the Jerseys, and so move on to Philadelphia."

Howe suddenly and certainly did "change his whole plan." He himself said his reason for not attacking Washington at White Plains was a political one, but refused to divulge it. His successes in the campaign so far had not been decided ones. He had not been able to crush the rebellion in a single great battle as he hoped, and he found he must ask the Ministry in England for more men and materials. Though they were not his political friends, still, they had given him his command, and must be placed in a position to do so with ease and honor. And an occurrence utterly unexpected had just transpired by which he could not only do this, but at the same time win great applause for himself, and strike a blow deadly, if not fatal, to the rebellion, and that too with no risk of failure and little of loss.

He had good cause "to change his whole plan," as Reed expressed it. And that cause was *the treason of a commissioned officer of the American army.* Four years before Arnold's attempt to betray West Point, a similar but more successful traitor betrayed Mount Washington. *On the 2d of November, 1776, the Adjutant of Magaw, the commandant of the fortress, passed, undiscovered, into the British camp of Lord Percy, carrying the plans of Fort Washington, and full information as to its works and garrison, and placed them in the hands of that officer.*

It was Percy's duty, of course, instantly to send the plans and the Adjutant to Sir William Howe, then at White Plains. As he could only do this by way of the East river, or the North river, it probably was the evening of the 3d of November before Howe received them, and they may possibly not have reached him till the 4th. The British commander now saw not only how he could certainly capture Mount Washington, but how he could do it without much loss, send the ministry in England a glowing account of forts, guns, and men taken, deprive Washington of a large force of his best troops, seize the communication between New York and Westchester, and destroy that between the eastern and southern colonies across the Hudson, on which both had so long relied; he acted accordingly.

Alexander Graydon, a captain in Cadwallader's regiment, who was taken at Mount Washington, says, in his striking "Memoirs of his own Times," given to the world in 1811, "Howe must have had a perfect knowledge of the ground we occupied. This he might have acquired from hundreds in New York, but he might have been more thoroughly informed of everything desirable to be known from an officer

of Magaw's Battalion, who was intelligent in points of duty, and deserted to the enemy about a week before the assault." The same thing is intimated in one or two of the German accounts of the capture of Mount Washington.

What these writers thought a possibility, is now an *absolute certainty*. The evidence too, is of the most conclusive character—that of the traitor himself—in a letter of his own, over his own signature, stating the treason in plain, undeniable terms.

Sixteen years after the fall of Fort Washington, in order to obtain a small amount due him by the British government, he wrote the following letter, the contents of which were to be used in obtaing payment of his claim from certain British officials in Canada. It is addressed to the Rev. Dr Peters, a clergyman of the Church of England, originally of Hebron, and the author of the History of Connecticut. In Dr Peters' possession, and that of two gentlemen of this city, father and son, the elder of whom married a ward of Dr Peters, who resided with him, and died in his house, both well-known members of the bar, this letter has remained until recently placed in the hands of the author of this article. Its authenticity is therefore beyond a cavil.

It is given, with its errors of grammar and style, precisely as written.

REV. SIR:

Permit me to Trouble you with a Short recital of my Services in America which I Presume may be deem'd among the most Singular of any that will go to Upper Canada. On the 2d of Nov'r 1776 I Sacrificed all I was Worth in the World to the Service of my King & Country and joined the then Lord Percy, brought in with [me] the Plans of Fort Washington, by which Plans that Fortress was taken by his Majesty's Troops the 16 instant, Together with 2700 Prisoners and Stores & Ammunition to the amount of 1800 Pound. At the same time, I may with Justice affirm, from my Knowledge of the Works, I saved the Lives of many of His Majestys Subjects,—these Sir are facts well-known to every General Officer which was there—and I may with Truth Declare from that time I Studied the Interest of my Country and neglected my own—or in the Language of Cardinal Woolsey had I have Served my God as I have done my King he would not Thus have Forsaken me.

The following is a Just Account due me from Government which I have never been able to bring forward for want of Sr. William Erskine who once when in Town assured me he'd Look into it but have never done it otherways I should not have been in Debt.

This Sir though it may not be in your Power to Get me may Justify my being so much in Debt, & in Expectation of this Acct being Paid, together with another Dividend, from the Express words of the Act where it Says all under Ten Thousand pound Should be Paid without Deduction, I having received only £464 which I Justified before the Commissioners:

Due for Baw, Batt, & Forrage - - - - - - - - -	£110. 7.0
For Engaging Guides Getting Intelligence, &c. - - - - - - -	45. 9.7
For doing duty as Commissary of Prisoners at Philadelphia Paying Clerks Stationery, &c.	16.13.8
	£182.10.3

The last Two Articles was Cash Paid out of my Pocket which was Promised to be Refunded by Sirs Wm Howe and Erskine.

I most Humbly Beg Pardon for the Length of this Letter & Shall Conclude without making Some Masonac Remarks as at first Intended, and Remain

Rev'd Sir with Dutiful Respect
Your most obedient and Most Hum'l Serv't.
WILLIAM DEMONT.

London Jany 16th 1792.

P.S. the Inclosed is a true account of my Debts taken from the Different Bills received.

Such was the treason of William Demont. Originally entering Magaw's battalion in Philadelphia as an ensign by the appointment of the Pennsylvania Council of Safety, he was by the same body appointed its Adjutant on the 29th of February, 1776, and went with it to New York at the end of June in that year. This position gave him Magaw's confidence, and when, on Putnam's departure to join Washington's army, that officer was left in command of Mount Washington, it also gave him the fullest information of the post, and of every thing that was done or intended to be done in relation to it. What the two words *Baw*, *Batt*, evidently abbreviations in the first line of the account mean is not known; they are given as written.

Graydon mistakes both the time of his desertion and his name. He left a fortnight before the capture, and not a week. He gives the name as "*Dement*," and so it also appears in the printed proceedings of the Pennsylvania Committee of Safety, and in the Army Returns. But, if this is not a printer's error, he subsequently changed the last vowel, for he writes it himself, unmistakably, "*Demont*." Of his subsequent career little is known, except that during the British occupation of Philadelphia he acted as a Commissary of prisoners. From that time until he appears in London in 1792, writing the above letter, nothing has been learned of him, nor has it been possible as yet to trace him after that date. Nor yet whether he obtained his claim. Probably he could say :—

> "It is the curse of treachery like mine
> To be most hated where it most has serv'd."

Sir William Howe's course shows that he acted on Demont's plans and information; for, reaching Dobb's Ferry on the 6th of September with his army, he the next day dispatched his park of artillery to Kingsbridge, with a strong escort, to join von Knyphausen. And the first step after its arrival was to place batteries in position on the Westchester side of the Harlem river, to cover selected points of attack on the New York side. The next three days were occupied by the necessary preparations for an assault, and in sending a brigade of Hessians to von

Knyphausen, whose own headquarters were also on the Westchester side of Harlem river. About the 9th or 10th of November a deserter named Broderick came one cold rainy night over to Captain Graydon while he was on guard at the Point of Rocks, who told him "that we might expect to be attacked in six or eight days at furthest, as some time had been employed in transporting heavy artillery to the other side of the Haerlem, and as the preparations for the assault were nearly completed." On the 12th Howe's whole army marched to Kingsbridge, and encamped the next day on the high ground on the same side of that river, with its right on the Bronx and its left on the Hudson. On the night of the 14th, undiscovered by either Magaw or Greene, thirty boats, chiefly from the transport fleet under Captains Wilkinson and Malloy, passed up the North river, and through Spuyten Duyvel to the Harlem river.

Howe had determined on four separate assaults upon Mount Washington; the first and main one by von Knyphausen and the Hessians from Kingsbridge, aided by the man-of-war Pearl lying in the North river; the second by boats across the Harlem river with English troops upon Laurel Hill; the third by Scotch troops under Colonel Sterling, also by boats across the Harlem river, upon the hill inside the American lines of fortification near the Morris House; and the fourth by Earl Percy, with English and a few German troops to march from the lines at McGowan's pass upon the American lines to the southward of Mount Washington. Batteries on the Harlem river opposite the chosen points of attack covered them completely.[1]

Such was the British plan of attack.

What were Greene at Fort Lee, and Magaw at Mount Washington, doing all this time? And what was the action of the Commander-in-Chief?

Washington on the 5th of November replied through his Secretary, Harrison, to Greene's request of the 30th of October above mentioned, for his "mind" as to holding all Fort Washington, "that the holding or not holding the grounds between Kingsbridge and the lower lines depends upon so many circumstances that it is impossible for him to determine the point. He submits it entirely to your discretion and such judgment as you shall be able to form from the enemy's movements, and the whole complexion of things. He says, you know the original design was to garrison the works and preserve the lower lines as long as they could be kept, that the communication across the river might be open

[1]Howe's first Dispatch, Nov. 30. Force 5th series, vol. iii, pp. 921, 925.

to us, and the enemy at the same time should be prevented from having a passage up and down the river for their ships."[1]

On the 7th Washington writes personally to Greene: "We conceive that Fort Washington will be an object for part of his (Howe's) force, while New Jersey may claim the attention of the other part. To guard against the evils arising from the first, I must recommend you to pay every attention in your power, and give every assistance you can, to the garrison opposite. * * * If you have not sent my boxes, with camp tables, and chairs, be so good as to let them remain with you, as I do not know but I shall move with the troops designed for the Jerseys, persuaded as I am of their having turned their views that way."[2]

Surely this was full authority to Greene to reinforce Mount Washington if he saw fit, and as surely Washington did not expect it to be the object of Howe's "views." The next day (the 8th) he heard of the passage of three British vessels up the North river, and thereby convinced of the inefficiency of the obstructions therein, wrote Greene: "What valuable purpose can it answer to attempt to hold a post from which the expected benefit cannot be had? I am, therefore, inclined to think it will not be prudent to hazard the men and stores at Mount Washington, but as you are on the spot leave it to you to give such orders as to evacuating Mount Washington as you judge best, and so far revoking the order given to Colonel Magaw to defend it to the last."[3]

This, though a strong opinion, still left it to Greene's judgment, and the latter replies on the 9th, after visiting the post the evening before: "Upon the whole I cannot help thinking the garrison is an advantage; and I cannot conceive the garrison to be in any great danger. The men can be brought off at any time, but the stores may not so easily be removed, yet I think they can be got off in spite of them, if matters grow desperate. This post is of no consequence only in conjunction with Mount Washington. I was over there last evening; the enemy seem to be disposing matters to besiege the place; but Colonel Magaw thinks it will take them till December expires before they can carry it."[4]

Two letters passed from Greene to Washington—the one on the 10th and the other on the 11th, and the only reference to Mount Washington in either is the closing line of the latter, "the enemy remains quiet there this afternoon."[5]

[1]Harrison's Letter. Force 5th series, vol. iii. p. 519.
[2]Force 5th series, vol. iii, p. 557.
[3]Ibid. p. 602.
[4]Ibid. p. 619.
[5]Ibid. p. 638.

Washington wrote no other letter to Greene after that of the 8th. On the 10th he left White Plains, where he had been all the time, at 11 A. M., and rode to Peekskill. The 11th he spent in a reconnoissance of the Highlands, and on the 12th, after writing two letters,[1] crossed the North river to the ferry landing below Stoney Point on his way to the army in Jersey. The same day Greene wrote President Hancock; "I expect General Howe will attempt to possess himself of Mount Washington, but very much doubt whether he will succeed in the attempt. Our troops are much fatigued with the amazing duty, but are generally in good spirits."[2]

As Washington crossed the Hudson he saw the three British men of war, which had come up on the 7th, quietly riding at anchor in the Tappan Sea. The obstructions and *chevaux-de-frise* from which so much had been expected had been passed with ease. They were absolute failures. The British ships neither went over them nor through them, but around them, close in, on either the eastern or western shore, one of the largest vessels, which it was proposed to sink, in consequence of a blunder bilged and went down far from her destined position, and part of the *chevaux-de-frise* found after the capture, having apparently never been used.[3]

On the 14th November Washington wrote a long letter to the President of Congress, dated at "General Greene's Head-quarters," beginning, "I have the honor to inform you of my arrival here yesterday," in which he discussed at length various subjects of public concern, but remarked casually on the movements of the enemy that, "it seems to be generally believed on all hands that the investing of Fort Washington is one object they have in view," and closed with the words, "I propose to stay in this neighborhood a few days, in which time I expect the designs of the enemy will become disclosed, and their incursions be made in this quarter, or their investiture of Fort Washington, if they are intended."

This shows clearly that both Washington and Greene were in doubt on the 14th, the day before Mount Washington was summoned to surrender, whether it was to be attacked or not.

On the 15th, the day of the summons, Washington wrote two letters to the Board of War, one dated, "General Greene's Quarters," on an

[1]One to General Lee, and the other—a very full one—of instructions to General Heath. Mount Washington is mentioned in neither. Ibid. 656, 657.

[2]Force 5th series, vol. iii, p. 653.

[3]British return of ordnance and stores taken from 12th of October to 20th of November, 1776. Force 5th series, vol. iii, p. 1058–9.

exchange of ladies, and the other dated "Hackensack," on an exchange of prisoners with the enemy, but alludes in neither to Mount Washington.[1]

The arrival undiscovered, of his boats after midnight of the 14th, completed Howe's preparations, but the next day proving unfavorable, he postponed the attack to the 16th. A short time after noon on the 15th, a mounted officer, with two or three companions under a white flag, crossed Kingsbridge, and slowly ascended the heights towards Fort Washington. The American commander sent down to meet him Colonel Swoope of Pennsylvania. The officer proved to be Lieutenant-Colonel Patterson, the Adjutant-General of the British Army, who bore a summons to Colonel Magaw to surrender at discretion or suffer the consequences of a storm, which by military law is liability to be put to the sword if taken, and he required an answer in two hours.

Magaw at once dispatched a note with the intelligence to Greene at Fort Lee, saying to him at the same time, "we are determined to defend the post or die." He then returned to the summons this brave answer, addressed "To the Adjutant General of the British Army.—Sir, If I rightly understand the purport of your message from General Howe, communicated to Colonel Swoope, this post is to be immediately surrendered, or the garrison put to the sword. I rather think it is a mistake than a settled resolution in General Howe, to act a part so unworthy of himself and the British Nation. But give me leave to assure his excellency that actuated by the most glorious cause that mankind ever fought in, I am determined to defend this post to the very last extremity."

ROB'T MAGAW, *Colonel Commanding.*

On receiving this note, Greene instantly ordered Heard's brigade "to hasten on," directed Magaw to defend to the last, and then in a letter dated "Fort Lee, 4 o'clock," sent enclosed Magaw's dispatch announcing Howe's summons to Washington, who was at Hackensack, arranging for the reception of the American Army then crossing into New Jersey. In his communication Greene said, "the contents will require your Excellency's attention."[2] Washington immediately started for Fort Lee; arrived there he found that Greene was on the New York side, and himself embarked to cross the river to the fort about 9 o'clock at night, "and [in his own words,] had partly crossed the North River, when I met General Putnam and General Greene, who were just returning from

[1]Force 5th series, vol. iii, p. 699.
[2]Ibid. 699, 700.

thence, and informed me that the troops were in high spirits and would make a good defence; and it being late at night I returned."

The morning of the 16th November, 1776, broke bright and fair. The mists in the deep valley of the Harlem had not yet risen when Lieutenant-General von Knyphausen, at the head of his Germans, marched from their camp on its Westchester side across Kingsbridge, and joined a small body of the same troops that had lain upon the island.

He had made a special request of Sir William Howe that the main attack might be made by himself at the head of German regiments only, and it had been granted. Forming his troops, consisting of detachments from his own corps, von Rahl's brigade and the Waldeck regiment, 3,000 in all, according to Graydon, into two columns, the right nearest the Hudson under Colonel von Rahl, and the left under Major-General von Schmid, the whole commanded by himself, he pressed forward about seven o'clock supported by a terrific cannonade from all the British batteries, intended to confuse the Americans as to the real point of the main attack. But receiving word from Howe that all was not quite ready, he rested quietly till the final arrangements for the other assaults were made. The sun had risen well above the Westchester hills on the eastern edge of the valley, when a gun from the British battery farthest down the Harlem suddenly threw a shot into the American lines south of Fort Washington. Then pushing forward a battery of Hessian field-guns far enough to engage the American batteries on the hill above what is now called Inwood, he put his columns in motion, each preceded by an advance guard of about 100 men. Von Rahl on the right, passing through the break in the hills forming the present entrance to Inwood, close along the Hudson river, pressed through the woods up the northern end of the long hill on which Fort Washington stood, supported by the guns of the Pearl frigate, which lay opposite the break, and fiercely attacked the American battery and redoubt on its crest, defended by Colonel Rawling's regiment of Maryland riflemen, under himself and Major Otho Williams, and some Pennsylvania troops. The pass was steep, narrow, covered with woods, and well defended. The greatest gallantry was shown on both sides. Again and again the Germans attacked, and again and again were repelled. Fighting behind intrenchments, the Americans had the advantage of position; the Germans that of numbers. Many were killed on both sides, but far more of the latter than the former.

The American guns, only three in number, served rapidly and well, did great execution. But courage and numbers finally prevailed over courage and intrenchments, and the Germans, with a shout, at last car-

ried the crest of the hill, and drove the Americans, whose rifles at the last had become almost too foul for use, from their works.

Von Schmid's column, with which von Knyphausen himself was, took a more easterly route, and attacked the same position a little nearer the Kingsbridge road, but having to penetrate a triple *abatis* of felled trees, and to go through a thick undergrowth covering the declivity, they were somewhat delayed; but forcing their way through, von Knyphausen in person leading and helping to break down the obstructions with his own hands, the two German columns united upon the summit of the hill, and completed the discomfiture of the Americans, who retreated along its flat top to the fort.

Just as the Germans became fully engaged the English regiments of light infantry and guards, four in number, under Brigadier-General Mathews, supported by the First and Second Grenadiers and the Thirty-third foot, under Cornwallis, in thirty boats, under cover of a tremendous fire from the British batteries on its Westchester side, crossed Harlem river to Sherman's Creek. Though met with a sharp fire, they instantly ascended the face of Laurel Hill, high wooded and precipitous, the fallen leaves, yet moist with the rain of the preceding day, rendering the footing still more difficult, and drove from the battery on its brow and its summit the Pennsylvania troops (the last reinforcements sent over from Fort Lee) whom Magaw had detailed to defend it. Though defeated and forced to retreat, they made a brave defense. Colonel Baxter (their commander) being killed, sword in hand, at the head of his men. About eight o'clock Earl Percy with two brigades, one English and the other Hessian under von Stein, began the attack upon the lines to the south of Mount Washington. With this corps was Sir William Howe himself, who animated the troops by his presence and personal bravery. The American lines were defended by Colonel Lambert Cadwallader at the head of his own, and Magaw's Pennsylvania battalions and some broken companies from Miles' and other regiments, chiefly from Pennsylvania. Driving them from a small outwork and the first fortified line across the island, Percy rested, extending his line however to the North river.

As soon as he obtained this advantage orders were sent to Colonel Sterling (whose attack, originally intended as a feint, was now changed into reality), on the Harlem river, who with the Highlanders, supported by two battalions of the Second Brigade, instantly crossed the river in boats and landed at the foot of the hill, near the Morris House, inside of the American lines. Magaw, who had remained at the

centre of the position with a few men, in order to direct all the operations, at once sent about a hundred men to oppose them, and Cadwallader also dispatched about one hundred and fifty for the same purpose. They poured a heavy fire into Sterling's boats as they reached the shore, killing and wounding many men, but failed to stop his landing, as they were only aided by a single eighteen pound gun. Leaving behind their Major, named Murray, a man so fat he could not keep pace with them, the Highlanders, in kilt and tartan, rushed up the ascent with such speed and dash that they actually made prisoners of about a hundred and seventy of the Americans. Hearing his calls, some of his men then went back and helped their stout Major to the top of the hill.

When Stirling's fire was heard, Percy again quickly advanced, and Cadwallader, after a short and brisk contest at the second line, finding himself in danger of being cut off by the Highlanders, retreated to the Fort, into which the flying Americans had crowded in disorder as they were driven from their respective lines of defence.

Knyphausen's columns having neared the fort first, and taken a commanding position within a hundred yards of its west side, he sent a second summons to surrender, which was received by Cadwallader and referred to Magaw.

The fort itself does not seem to have fired at all. It was in fact so crowded by the fugitive Americans that they would have been slaughtered in masses had it been defended and stormed. When they first began to crowd in Magaw endeavored to animate them, urging them again to man the lines, but in vain. They could not again be rallied.

When Washington from Fort Lee saw the success of the German attack, he sent Captain Gooch over the river with a note to Colonel Magaw to try and hold out till night, when he would endeavor to relieve him and bring off the garrison. Gooch rowed across, delivered the note, and returned in safety with the answer. But his mission was too late. Magaw had proceeded so far in his negotiations for a surrender that he could not withdraw. After much parley, he signed articles of capitulation with General von Knyphausen and Colonel Patterson, the British Adjutant General, by which safety of persons and baggage was guaranteed, and the fort then surrendered to the British, who subsequently, in honor of the gallantry of the Germans and their commander, changed its name to Fort Knyphausen.

Demont's treason had done its work, and the flag of England again waved over the entire island of New York. Twenty-eight hundred and eighteen prisoners, including officers, forty-three guns, and a large quan-

tity of military stores, including "200 iron fraise of four hundred weight each, supposed to be intended to stop the navigation of Hudson's River," fell into the hands of the victors, besides 2,800 muskets, 400,000 cartridges, 15 barrels of powder, and several thousand shot and shell. The loss of the Americans was four officers killed and three wounded, and fifty privates killed and ninety wounded, a total of one hundred and forty-seven. The British loss was seventy-eight killed and three hundred and eighty wounded, a total of four hundred and fifty-eight; of which that of the Hessians alone was fifty-eight killed and two hundred and seventy-two[1] wounded, including officers, being in all three hundred and thirty. The British forces engaged were, according to Graydon, three thousand under von Knyphausen, eight hundred under Stirling, and sixteen hundred under Percy. Mathews' numbers he does not give, but as there were seven regiments, of only about five hundred effective men each, they may be set down as thirty-five hundred, making a total force of eighty-nine hundred. Sir William Howe's dispatch gives merely the names of the regiments engaged, not their numbers.

In the defense of Mount Washington Magaw seems to have disposed of his men to the best advantage, considering its great extent and his numbers, especially as he had to make his full dispositions after the British plan had developed itself; and he did his duty faithfully.

Washington's private judgment was opposed to holding the post after the retreat from New York, but he was governed by the wishes of Congress and the decisions of his Council of War. When the British ships last passed up the river in spite of the obstructions, he strongly advised, and also authorized, General Greene and Magaw to abandon the post, *but did not command it to be done*. He was present, too, at Greene's quarters at Fort Lee and at Hackensack from the 13th, when he found his advice had not been followed, to the 16th, and during this time could easily have ordered the post abandoned and the garrison withdrawn, if he had seen fit. On the other hand, General Greene was for holding the fortress throughout from the very first. After the last passage of the frigates he was left to use his own discretion whether to abandon it or not by the Commander-in-Chief, and he exercised that discretion by holding it, as he had a perfect right to do. Neither General should be censured at the expense of the other—each did what he thought was for the best under the circumstances, and neither dreamt

[1] Force iii, 925, British returns of ordnance and stores taken. Ibid., 1058, Howe's dispatch.

that he had treason to contend against. The loss of Fort Washington was due to the first traitor of the American Army, William Demont.

There were instances on both sides in this action of humor and gaity, as well as of intrepidity and valor, in the midst of danger. One instance of the latter must be mentioned, which has rarely been equalled or surpassed. In one of the Pennsylvania regiments was a soldier named Corbin, who was accompanied by his wife. His post was at one of the guns in the battery on the hill attacked by the Hessians, where the battle raged hardest, hottest, and longest; for it was between two and three hours before the Germans succeeded in carrying that position. In the midst of the fight Corbin, struck by a ball, fell dead at his wife's feet as she was aiding him in his duties. Instantly, without a word, she stepped into his place and worked the gun with redoubled skill and vigor, fighting bravely till she sank to the earth, pierced by three grapeshot in the shoulder. Though terribly wounded, she finally recovered, but was disabled for life. A soldier's half-pay and the value of a soldier's suit of clothes, annually voted her by the Continental Congress while John Jay presided, was all the reward that the first woman who fought for American liberty ever received for such heroic love, courage, and suffering.

Thirty-two years afterward Spain's glowing, dark-eyed daughter, erect in the deadly breach, fiercely defending her native city against the French invader, and hurling vengeance on the slayers of her lover dead at her feet, burst upon the world never to be forgotten. The deed of Augustina of Aragon, the Maid of Zaragoza, was not nobler, truer, braver than that of Margaret Corbin of Pennsylvania. Byron's immortal lines are as true of the one as of the other:

> " Her lover sinks,—she sheds no ill timed tear,
> Her chief is slain,—she fills his fatal post;
> The foe retires,—she heads the sallying host:
> Who can appease, like her, a lover's ghost?

E. F. DeLANCEY.

NOTE.—This account is an extended statement of one of Mr. E. F. DeLancey's editorial notes in the first volume of the History of New York during the American Revolution, written at its close by the Hon. Thomas Jones, of Queens county, Long Island (giving a Loyalist account of the war), now in press, and soon to be issued by the New York Historical Society.

NEW YORK ISLAND

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COLONEL MAGAW'S ORDERLY BOOK AT MOUNT WASHINGTON.

The following is a copy of all the entries in the Orderly Book of Colonel Magaw, taken from the original by the kind permission of its present owner, the Rev. Dr. Joseph A. Murray, of Carlisle, Pennsylvania. It begins October 31st, 1776, but unfortunately stops November 10th, 1776, six days before the surrender. The order of Nov. 1st, increasing the picket guards very strongly for the 2d, may have been the proximate cause of Demont's departure. He probably did not want to run the risk of the increased numbers of pickets, and therefore went over to the enemy before they were actually placed on guard. E. F. de L.

"Harlem Heights, October 25th.
Parole Danvers. Co. Sign Newberry.

Saturday, October 26th.
Parole Lexington. Co. Sign Concord.

Sunday, October 27th.
Parole Roxbury. Co. Sign Cambridge.

Monday, October 28th.
Parole Litchfield. Co. Sign Norwich.

Tuesday, October 29th.
Parole Berks. Co. Sign Reading.

Wednesday, October 30th.
Parole Lancaster. Co. Sign York.

Thursday, October 31st.
Parole Cumberland. Co. Sign Carlisle.

Friday, November 1st.
Parole Pittsburgh. Co. Sign Bedford.

Coll. Magaw's Orders.

Ninety men for Picquet towards New York tomorrow, to be stationed as follows—North River, 1 Sub. and 20; Holloway, 1 Sergt. and 10; Point of Rocks, 1 Sub. and 20; Works near Harlaem River, 1 Sub. and 20; One Capt. at the Point of Rocks or North River; 1 Sub. and 20 on the East River between Head quarters and Fort Washington. Weekly returns to be given in before 12 o'clock at Noon, of the strength of the several Regiments and Detachments of our Troops now on this Island, that duty may be proportioned.

Capt. Longs Company to join Coll. Rawlings Battn.; in the mean time Capt. Moulton, of the Artillery, will appoint one of his Officers to act as Fort Major who will prevent all doubtfull or suspected persons entering the Fort, and observe such Orders As may be given by the Commanding Officer or Capt. Moulton.

Saturday, November 2d.
Parole Amboy. Co. Sign Woodbridge.

Sunday, November 3d.
Parole Morris. Co. Sign Potter.

Monday, November 4th.
Parole Sabrook. Co. Sign Enfield.

No cattle or hogs to be suffered in the Fort. No passes or passages to be made on any pretence whatsoever through the Abbatis, Lieut. Coll. Wypert is to be at liberty to have any Tents or obstructions removed which may be in his way in strengthening the works; all Officers to give him assistance for that purpose. The Officers of the several Guards to recommend the greatest allertness to their Centinels at this time and place, the most dangerous, important, and honourable, Post that, perhaps, Americans were ever placed in. The Liberty of this great and free Continent may in great measure de-

pend on our vigilance and bravery. Mr. John Morgan is to act as Brigade Major, all passes signed by him to be considered as good.

The Adjutants or Sergt. Majors of the several battalions to attend at Headquarters at 3 o'clock every day for orders, which will be delivered by Mr. Morgan, he will also deliver them the Parole and Counter Sign in the Evening. Each Battalion and Detachment to make out exact returns of their strength on this Island, both fit for duty and sick, as orders are received to transmit the returns to the Commander in Chief, and the Congress, these returns to be made by 12 o'clock tomorrow.

Tuesday, November 5th.

Parole Bristol. Co. Sign Frankfort.

Notwithstanding the frequent general orders against fireing guns about the Camp and wanton waste of Amunition, This destructive practice still prevails, Officers are to be very vigilant and detect and confine offenders, and also to examine the Cartouch Boxes at least twice a week, and charge the men 6d pr Cartridge for such as cant be accounted for.

Wednesday, November 6th.

Parole Dover. Co. Sign Darby.

The Officers of the Guards on the lines are to be very punctual in giveing strict orders to the Centinels to permit no person who is not in this service to come within the lines, but such as come to continue, as they will not on any pretence whatever be permitted to return, likewise no person to pass from here beyond the lines, as they will not on any account be suffered to return.

The Adjutants and Sergt. Majors of the several battalions and detachments are to be carefull that all their officers have the Reading the above orders.

Thursday, November 7th.

Parole Washington. Co. Sign Lee.

Friday, November 8th.

Parole Magaw. Co. Sign Greene.

Saturday, November 9th.

Parole Cadwallader. Co. Sign Beatty.

Sunday, November 10th.

Parole Brunswick. Co. Sign Burlington."

Colonel Robert Magaw was the eldest son of William Magaw a Scotch-Irish lawyer who came, prior to 1752, from Strabane, in the north of Ireland, to Maryland, and thence to Carlisle, in Pennsylvania. He was born in Ireland, was a lawyer, married while a prisoner Marritie Van Brunt of Flatbush, and died 6th January, 1790, at Carlisle, leaving a son and daughter. His regiment, 5th Pennsylvania, numbered 25 officers and 312 men when surrendered. —*Ms. Magaw papers. Letter of Dr. Murray.*

Dodon Henry, Baron von Knyphausen, Lieutenant-General, born in Alsace, in 1730, son of Baron von Knyphausen a Colonel under Marlborough, and was a descendant of the great Holland General of Gustavus Adolphus, whose name he bore. Tall, spare in person, very German in appearance, he was, though a strict officer, popular with both officers and men. He died in Berlin, in 1794, a full General in the Prussian service.—*Watson's Philadelphia Biographie Universelle.*

Parade of the Prisoners.—"The prisoners taken at Mt. Washington were all paraded near the Jews' Burying Ground (now Chatham Square). They were said to be 2,500; no insults were offered to them when paraded, nor any public huzzaing or rejoicing as was usual on similar and less occasions."—*Ms. letter of John McKesson to Geo. Clinton.*

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